

Basics of Strategic Planning

General Principles

- Strategic Planning is a process that a program's top management uses to determine its future direction over the next several (usually 5) years (i.e., its long-range goals).
 - It is not a process that should be entered into with the expectation that it can be done quickly or in isolation.
 - External stakeholders or customers are an integral piece of the planning process, as they help identify or clarify the Organizational Mission.
 - Once the Mission is decided upon, top management needs to examine the external forces that could impact the success of accomplishing the mission. They need to develop high level strategies to address these external forces.
 - As part of developing these strategies, leadership **MUST** examine its Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT). These four categories allow top management to balance their views of the internal organization (Strengths and Weaknesses) with their views of the external world (Opportunities and Threats).
 - High quality data, collected through reliable information systems, is crucial to helping top leadership conduct this SWOT analysis.
 - While Strategic Planning is done by top leadership, Strategic Thinking should be done at all layers of the organization. In fact, experts studying the **BEST PRACTICES** of Strategic Planning show that when management has its workforce deliberately and carefully document its strategic thinking and communicate it up the line, strategic planning is much enhanced.
- The Strategic Planning process will not be successful if it is not integrated into the "business" or operational side of the organization. Program managers need to take the long-range goals and "translate" them into quantifiable or concrete results. Performance needs to be monitored, things need to be adjusted along the way, and successes need to be rewarded and celebrated.

Ten Tests of a Good Strategic Plan

1. The Plan is consistent with statutory authority
2. The Mission statement is made meaningful by a Vision
3. The Goals and Objectives are definitive and results-oriented
4. The strategies reflect the most efficient and effective road to achieving the goals
5. The Agency uses clear performance measures to track and report progress
6. The Agency's data collection systems are reliable
7. The Agency has coordinated its activities with other Agencies
8. Individual program managers are held accountable
9. External factors that could affect performance have been identified
10. A wide range of stakeholders have given input into the Plan

I. If you are asked to **UPDATE** an existing Strategic Plan:

1. Check-in with stakeholders or customers to validate the existing Organizational Mission and Vision. The check-in process doesn't have to be exhaustive, but it should be representative of stakeholders or customers.
2. Make sure there are no new external factors or variables that impact the ability to accomplish the mission. If there are, top leadership will need to develop new strategies for handling them.
3. If changes are made to the existing Strategic Plan, explain the reasons for such changes to program managers as they will need to "translate" them to the Operational Plans.

II. If you are asked to **CREATE** a new Strategic Plan:

John Bryson, author of *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations*, breaks the strategic planning process into 8 Basic Steps.

Step 1: Initial Agreement: Plan for planning

Step 2: Identify Organizational Mandates

Step 3: Identify Mission/Values (by the stakeholders)

Step 4: Assess the External Environment (Opportunities and Threats)

Step 5: Assess the Internal Environment (Strengths and Weaknesses)

Step 6: Identify the Strategic Issues Facing the Organization

Step 7: Develop Strategies to Manage these Issues

Step 8: Establish an Effective Organizational Vision for the Future

III. What Do All the Terms Mean?

Understanding the strategic planning nomenclature can be confusing to managers. Some explanations are provided below.

Mission: The "MainThing" or primary business of the program. It should be concise, clear, and describe the organization's core competencies.

Vision: A statement clarifying what the organization should look like and how it should fulfill its mission. It describes how the organization will look when it's working well. It may be a very specific quantitative pronouncement of a measurable goal.

Example: (Taken from *The Business of Government* by Kessler and Kelley)

Mission: To provide a quality liberal arts education to all students who wish to attend State University and to prepare students to function as outstanding employees when they enter the workplace.

Vision: To emerge from a recent period of declining enrollment as the most attractive school to attend in our region for a quality education. We expect, within three years, to have a waiting list of students and to achieve this vision by MM/YY.

Example: From the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Mission: To protect and enhance Oregon's fish and wildlife and their habitats for use and enjoyment by present and future generations.

Vision: Oregon's fish and wildlife are thriving in healthy habitats due to cooperative efforts and support by all Oregonians.

Goals: The ultimate outcome of all the activities being performed (i.e. the reason you're doing all the work in the first place!).

Refer to your Program Logic Model. If you've done a good job with the Basic Program Rationale, the Goal statement(s) can be pulled directly from this tool.

- Example Case 1: EAB: Eradicate Emerald Ash Bohrer and protect U.S. ash trees
- Example Case 2: END: Protect poultry by eradicating END from the western U.S.
- Example Case 3: Wildlife Disease: Safe Agricultural trade, reduced losses to agricultural and natural resources, and improved biosecurity for livestock, wildlife, and human health and safety.

Strategies: Broad descriptions of the various activities being performed to achieve the goal(s).

In APHIS, examples may include: Pre-clearance Inspections in foreign countries, Surveillance techniques, Voluntary Compliance Programs, Eradication efforts (trapping, sterile fly release), Outreach and Education.

IV. If the Mission is Difficult to Express

The Executive's Guide to Strategic Planning lists 12 questions that can help:

1. What business should we be in?
2. Why do we exist (what is our basic purpose)?
3. What is unique or distinctive about our organization?
4. Who are our principal customers, clients, or users?
5. What are our principal products/services, present and future?
6. What are our principal market segments, present and future?
7. What are our principal outlets/distribution channels, present and future?
8. What is different about our business from what it was 3 to 5 years ago?
9. What is likely to be different from our business in 3 to 5 years?
10. What are our principal economic concerns, and how are they measured?
11. What philosophical issues are important to our organization's future?
12. What special considerations do we have in regard to the following stakeholders?